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Floreen

or

The Story of Mitchell

A Legend of the "Land of the Sky"

by G. W. Belk

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To all who cherish the memory

of

DR. ELISHA MITCHELL

and love

THE "LAND OF THE SKY"

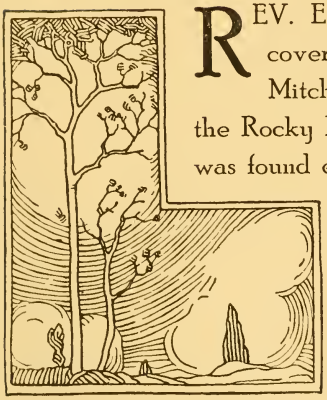
these lines are respectfully dedicated

by the Author

Summit of Mt. Mitchell
Altitude 6,711 ft.
Not far from the Railroad Station

Rev. Elisha Mitchell, D. D.

1793—1857



REV. ELISHA MITCHELL, who discovered that "Black Dome", now Mt. Mitchell, is the highest point East of the Rocky Mountains, slipped and fell, and was found eleven days later in a pool or lake of water, by Big Tom Wilson. He is buried on the top of the Mountain, and a monument will be placed there in the near future, to mark his resting place.

Dr. Mitchell was a native of Connecticut, a graduate of Yale, and for forty years a distinguished Professor in the North Carolina University, and greatly beloved.

In 1819, he was happily married to Miss Mariah North, of New London, Connecticut, an "Elect Lady".

In 1821, he was ordained to the Gospel Ministry by Orange Presbytery, a clear, strong preacher.

In 1844, he made the discovery that "Black Dome" was the highest point of land East of the Mississippi River. Later some disputation having arisen, he went back with his son, and one of daughters, to confirm his claim. Leaving them on Saturday, June 27, 1857, promising to return Monday, he started over the top, to a settlement beyond the mountain. That was the last time he was seen alive.

Mt. Mitchell is 6,711 feet, but the railroad makes it easy now to reach this hitherto almost inaccessible height.

This is the Wonderful "Land of the Sky"

Floreen

I.

Afar from the surf of the sounding sea,
And the low sand dunes where the Trade Winds play,
Through swamp and sag where the cypress tree
And the tall pines whisper and swing and sway;
Westward, and on, over rolling plains,
Where the low hills lie in their sweet repose,
And the fields are glad for the recent rains,
And the breezes bringing the breath of the rose;
By city and village, to left and right,
Crossing the rivers and westward still,
Till the vales of the Piedmont pass from sight,
And onward and upward, from hill to hill,
You gaze on the blue peaks far and high,
And this is the wonderful "Land of the Sky".

—"Oh, Sir, I'm delighted to find you here,
A Royal Welcome to You I Give,
For this is the land where the Fairies live".

II.

Have you heard of the beautiful Skyland Queen,
Whom the Nymphs and the Fairies named Floreen ?
Near the Crest, by the Highlanders called Black Dome,
In a moss-lined cave, is her royal home!
This mystical queen of the "Land of the Sky"
Has seldom been seen by mortal eye;
With Nymphs and Fairies she keeps her tryst,
But passes by men in a veil of mist.

III.

Yet some, when the midnight winds were still,
Have heard her voice, on the moon-lit hill;
And others, awaking from slumbers sweet,
Have marked the fall of her fairy feet;
And you've no doubt heard of the mountaineer,
Who had lost his way, and while resting here,
Heard Nymphs and Fairies chanting a tune,
And saw her dance by the light of the moon!

The Crest by the Highlanders
called "Black Dome"

IV.

Some think her the Goblin that haunts the wood;
But others declare she is kind and good;
When cattle afar on the mountains roam,
She often has stopped them and turned them home;
And many a child that was lost, they say,
She has led back home by the smoothest way;
Yet all agree that this matchless Queen
Has the fairest face that was ever seen.

V.

But she cherished a Prophecy in her breast,
For it said: "Some day, on this lofty crest,
You'll meet with the princely man, whose name
Shall be linked with yours in immortal fame;
And whether his coming be early or late,
Only be patient and watch and wait."
So she watched and waited through passing years,
But saw him not 'mong the mountaineers.

Rev. Elisha Mitchell, D. D.

VI.

One eve, tripping in through the tranquil air,
And beholding Mitchell standing there,
She said in her heart, as she viewed him o'er;
"His like has never been here before";
For, full on his face fell the soft sunshine,
That gave it a radiance almost Divine!
Then out from the shadow she stepped with ease,
As her veil fell back on a passing breeze,
And a vision of lovliness, there she stood,
Surpassing the beauty of flesh and blood!
And the robe that she wore was of Fairy cloth,
As soft and smooth as the down of a moth.

"This is the Land Where the Fairies Live".

VII.

But he saw her not as she glided by,
For his gaze was fixed on the glowing sky;
She spoke,—and the tone of each silvery word
Was the sweetest a mortal had ever heard,
And they fell like melody soft and clear;
"Oh, sir, I'm delighted to find you here!
A royal welcome to you I give,
For this is the land where the Fairies live.
An Oracle told me you'd come some day
To measure this summit, and open the way
For countless thousands who now shall come
My realm to behold from this matchless dome."

Mt. Mitchell in the Distance.

VIII.

Surprised—for he thought there was no one near—
With mingled emotions of joy and fear,
And a little startled, he turned to see
What manner of person the speaker might be;
And there stood the wonderful Skyland Queen,
The lovliest creature that ever was seen!
But, however winning her outward charm,
He somehow felt that she meant him harm;
And recalling the Scripture how Satan might
Transform himself into an Angel of light,
He answered: "Ah, you are the Spirit, I guess,
That tempted my Lord in the wilderness!"

IX.

But sweetly she said: "I'm the Skyland Queen,
Whom Nymphs and Fairies call Floreen;
Though Mortals have often misunderstood,
And called me the Goblin that haunts the wood,
Yet no one has ever been harmed by me,
And the glory and charm of my realm are free;
For life and beauty and health are here,
The blessing that Mortals esteem most dear.

—"But in his confusion he missed the trail
That led down safely to the vale."

X.

"But listen; for much is revealed to me,
Of the wonderful things that are yet to be;
Your labors shall crown you with honor and fame,
And this great mountain shall bear your name;
And men shall come, with uncovered brow,
To honor the spot where you're standing now;
And, this glorious, health-giving 'Land of the Sky',
Shall be loved more and more as the years go by".

XI.

So saying, she faded away into air,
Leaving him lost in amazement there;
But he saw as a Seer in a trance may see,
The glory of things that are yet to be;
For rising in beauty before his eyes,
There spread a bright vision of Paradise!
But while he was standing in rapture there,
A Heavenly Convoy was cleaving the air,
And the Chariot that bore Good Elijah away,
Was coming for him at the close of the day!

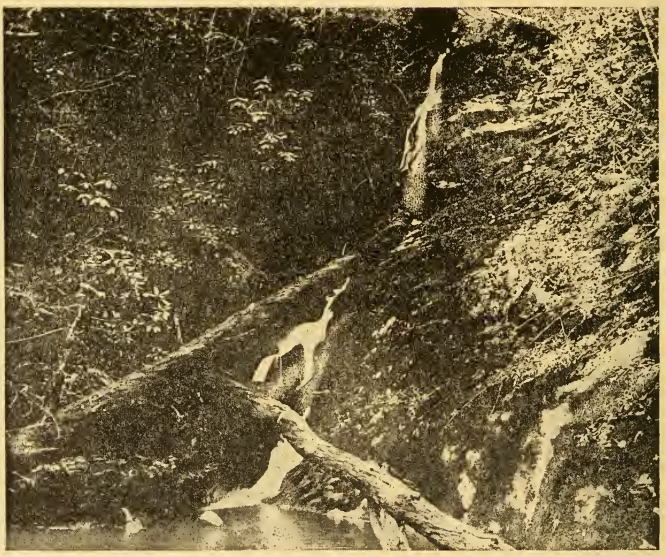
—"And over the mountains, by night and by day,
They sought for him, thinking he'd lost his way."

XII.

At length he awoke from his beautiful dream,
And saw by the sunset's fading gleam,
That he dare not linger, nor longer stay,
So turning he rapidly walked away;
But in his confusion he missed the trail
That led down safely to the vale,
And rambled in ways that he did not know,
Till slipping, he clung to the rock below,
But the Angels caught the bright spirit away,
And nothing fell back but his mantle of clay.

XIII.

Floreen, gliding down, gently lifted his head,
But saw in a moment that he was dead;
Then flowed the tears from her streaming eyes,
While the rocks resounded with her cries;
And for days and nights in her deep despair,
She sat by his lifeless body there;
And the tears of sorrow that fell for his sake,
Flowed constantly, forming a lachrymal lake!
But when the fount of her tears ran dry,
She sent to Heaven a pitiful cry,
And begged that this Rock, so cruel and steep,
Be evermore made for this deed to weep;
So the Fiat went forth that the Rock obey
And weep, as a penalty, night and day!



They found him there in the Lake of Tears.

XIV.

Meanwhile his friends, in their deep distress,
Were seeking him all through the wilderness;
And over the mountains, by night, and by day,
They sought for him, thinking he'd lost his way;
And led by Wilson, tall and strong,
The search was wide, and the search was long;
At last, when faint with increasing fears,
They found him there in the Lake of Tears!

XV.

Then Floreen, the beautiful, made request,
That his matchless body be laid to rest
In the place where she saw him that fatal day,
Where she might watch o'er his grave alway;
And, that men be sent to select a block,
For his Monument, from the Native Rock,
And skilfully sculpture, in outline fair,
The Face and the Name of Mitchell, there.

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